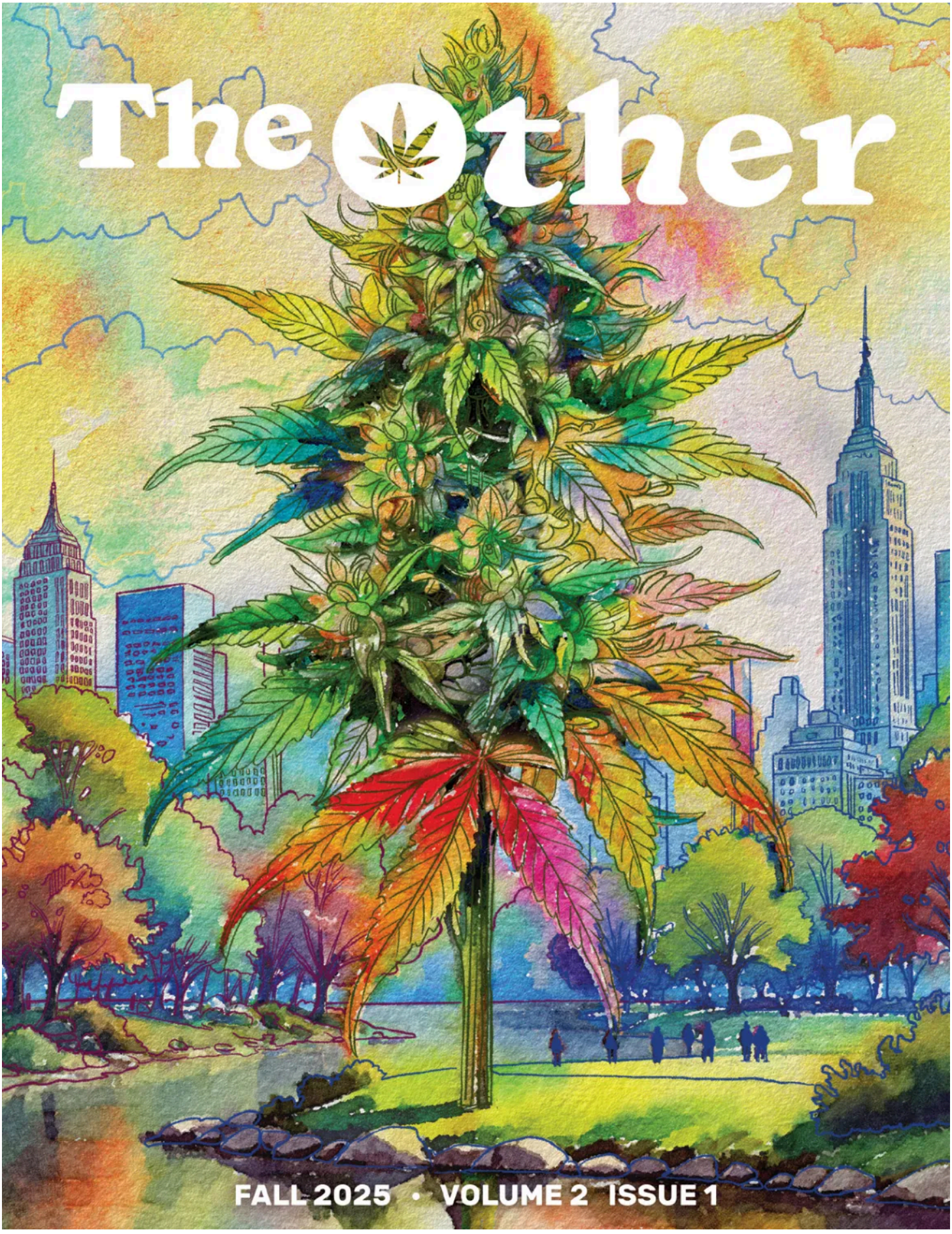
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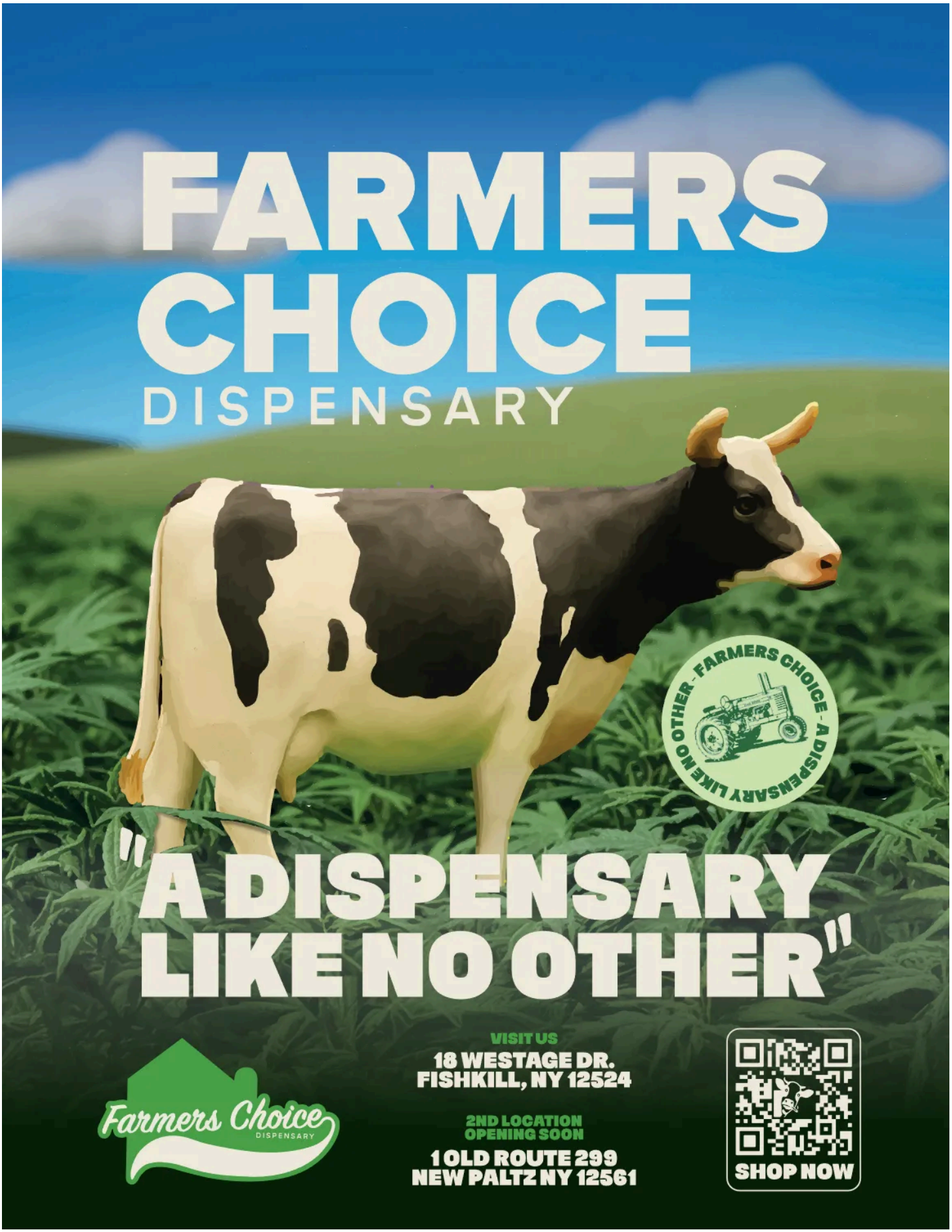
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Why 'The Other'?

The Other takes its name from **The East Village Other**, a pioneering 1960s counterculture newspaper. Like our namesake, which amplified marginalized voices, we celebrate cannabis culture's evolution from the fringes to the mainstream. Our name reclaims and honors the journey of the cannabis community from "the other"—once stigmatized and hidden—to a position of growing acceptance and legitimacy.

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CONSCIOUS MUSINGS

From Sessions to Billions

Fall Proves Cannabis is Here to Stay

by Peter Shafran

Hold up—did you see those numbers from Albany? $2 billion in legal cannabis sales statewide, with over $1 billion generated just this year. That's billion with a "B", people.

But here's what gets me even more fired up: we're not just watching this industry grow—we're helping build it. This year alone, we've been the media partner for Cannabis Means Business, the Revelry Buyers' Club, the Cannabis Collective annual retreat, and Hall of Flowers. That's industry leaders recognizing what we've built here.

Last month's Other Sessions debut at FloLo Holistic proved it: 40 people, every seat filled, Todd Sheaffer of Railroad Earth playing acoustic while Manhattan glittered below us. No warehouse vibes, no apologetic energy. Just sophisticated cannabis enthusiasts proving that premium experiences are exactly what this community wants.

This issue captures everything happening right now in New York cannabis—from Hudson Valley farms to NYC dispensaries to Long Island innovators like Strain Stars. We're diving deeper into psychedelics, wellness, and all the ways consciousness expansion is reshaping how we think about both medicine and recreation.

The numbers prove New York's cannabis market is crushing it. The Other Sessions proved our community is hungry for experiences that match their sophistication. And Volume Two? That's us doubling down on everything that's working.

So here's to $2 billion in legal sales, 40 people who proved premium cannabis events work, and whatever premium experiences we're cooking up for fall. This isn't just cannabis legalization—this is cannabis sophistication.

Light up responsibly (and stylishly!),

Peter Shafran
Publisher

HANDPICKED

In a world drowning in content and choices, curation is currency. I don't recommend things lightly—when something earns space in this section, it's because it delivers real value to people building elevated cannabis lifestyles. These are the products, places, and experiences I'm genuinely excited about right now.

Masters of the Harvest (Page 48)
Our feature on Supernaturals farm in Accord, Ulster County turned out even better than I imagined. The photography captures something special about Hudson Valley cannabis cultivation—those golden hour shots against the rolling hills prove this isn't just agriculture, it's artistry. Jens Verhaegh's approach to living soil and sustainable farming makes this required reading for anyone who cares about where their cannabis comes from.

Hybrid Theory's Trop Cherry
I got an early taste of this strain before it hits dispensaries, and it lives up to the hype. Sweet cherry notes with that tropical twist, plus balanced effects that work whether you're being creative or just want to unwind. This is craft cultivation at its finest—small indoor batches where science meets artistry. Keep an eye out for this one.

Mill & Main Restaurant, Kerhonkson
Farm-to-table done right in the heart of the Hudson Valley. After an incredible dinner, I handed our waiter two copies of the magazine. Minutes later, he returned with Chef Chris, who's also the co-owner—a cannabis enthusiast who immediately connected with what we're building. The food, service, and atmosphere earned my respect; the genuine excitement about the magazine earned my loyalty. Tell them The Other sent you.

The Other

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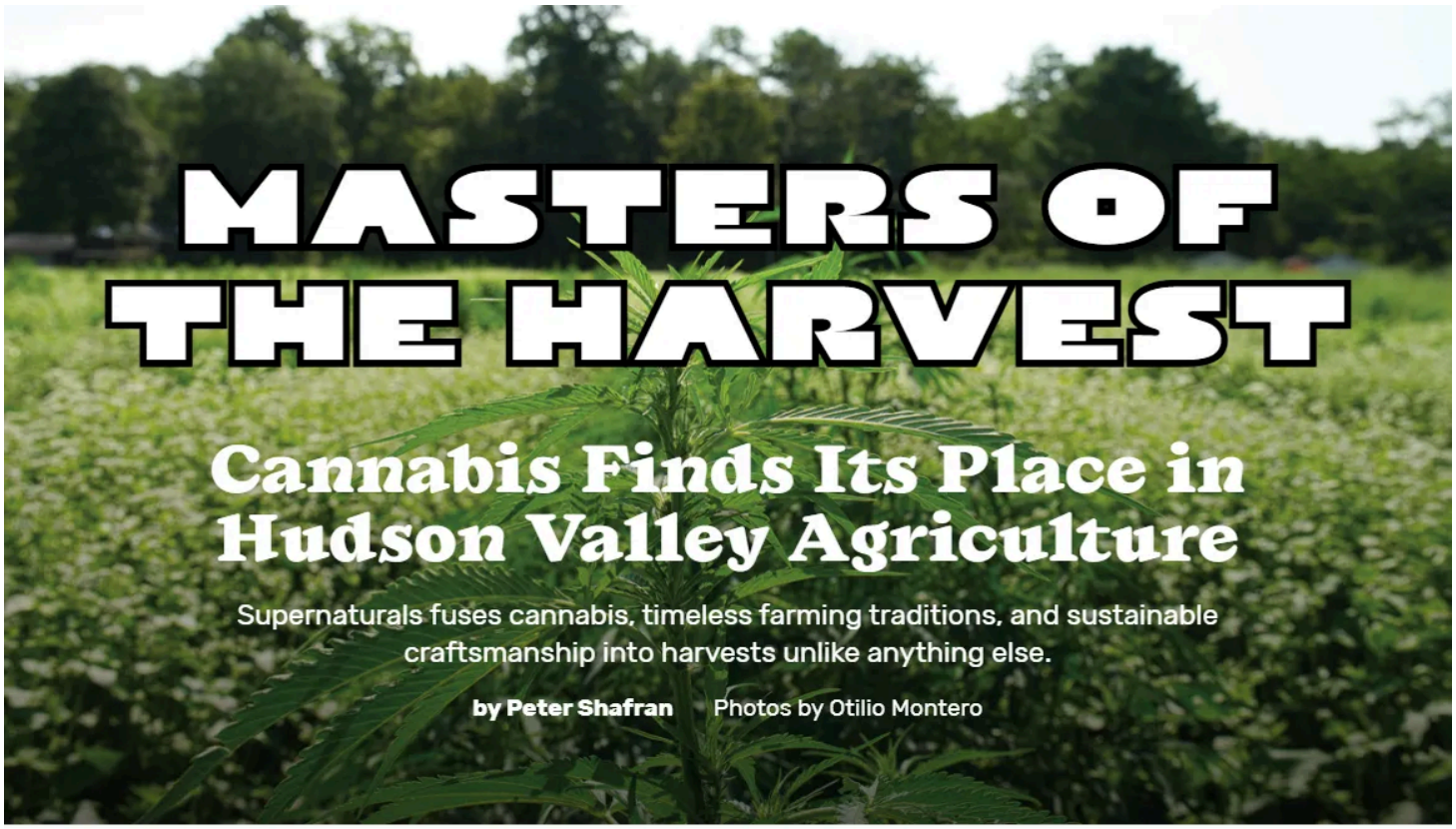


MASTERS OF THE HARVEST

Cannabis Finds Its Place in Hudson Valley Agriculture

Supernaturals fuses cannabis, timeless farming traditions, and sustainable craftsmanship into harvests unlike anything else.

by Peter Shafran Photos by Otilio Montero

The afternoon sun filters through the cannabis canopy at Supernaturals, casting golden shadows across rows of plants that stretch toward the rolling hills of Ulster County. Here, where the Hudson Valley's agricultural heritage meets its cannabis future, Jens Verhaegh moves through his fields with the practiced eye of someone who understands that great farming transcends any single crop.

Sheep graze contentedly in an adjacent pasture—the same land that hosted cannabis plants just last season. It's a rotation as old as agriculture itself, yet revolutionary in the context of New York's emerging cannabis industry. This is farming as integration, not isolation, and it represents something profound happening in the Hudson Valley: cannabis taking its rightful place alongside the region's centuries-old agricultural tradition.

"It's like medicine from our landscape," Jens explains, crouching to examine the rich, dark soil beneath a particularly robust plant. "The herbs, the honey, the foods that are grown around us—there's a synergy when stuff around us is what's best for us."

From Builder to Grower

Jens's journey to cannabis mastery began in New Jersey, where he worked in sustainable building design—energy auditing and retrofits that sought harmony between human habitation and environmental stewardship. "I was drawn to farming through just growing my own food," he recalls. "It was about being self-sufficient, and sort of like a lifestyle closer to the land."

Rock climbing brought him to the Hudson Valley in the mid-2000s, where he found work on herb farms—first at Taliaferro Farms, then Windfall Farms, eventually living at Cloe Valley Community Farm. When he bought his current property in 2015, cannabis remained in the shadows—what he calls "personal plus" growing, plants tucked into field edges where they caught whatever light they could.

"I didn't know outdoor weed could look this good because it was always grown sort of on the edges and in the shade," he reflects. "But then once we got the full sunlight, even with the CBD strain, some of those flowers turned out really amazingly beautiful."

The Philosophy of Living Soil

At the heart of Supernaturals' approach lies what Jens calls "minimal inputs, simple methods, and sustainable" farming. The buzzword "living soil" gets thrown around frequently in cannabis circles, but here it represents something deeper—a commitment to building and maintaining the soil food web that makes healthy plants possible.

"Living soil has to do with the soil food web," Jens explains. "It's soil that's alive with microorganisms that are digesting the soil and making nutrients available for the plants."

The compost comes from Ulster County. The hay for the sheep comes from nearby farms. Even the selection of beneficial plants—dill, cilantro, and yarrow to attract ladybugs and parasitic wasps—reflects this commitment to working within what Jens calls "a closer sort of biome." It's hyperlocal agriculture in the truest sense, where every input strengthens the connection between plant, soil, and place.

Integration Instead of Isolation

What sets Supernaturals apart isn't just their cultivation methods—it's their integration with traditional Hudson Valley agriculture. The partnership with Taliaferro Farm, where Delaney Ferriss is taking over operations from her retiring father Pete, represents more than land access; it's a symbol of cannabis finding its place within the region's agricultural continuum.

Beck Rourke-Mooney, Supernaturals' Director of Operations and Head of Sales, sees this integration as central to the company's identity and future. "There's a hope that the Hudson Valley, because we're like a place where people will pay for organic produce that's been grown by people they know and we'll pay a little extra, right? The same thing is going to happen with Hudson Valley cannabis."

It's a compelling vision: cannabis as terroir, where the specific conditions of place—soil, climate, farming tradition—create products that reflect their origin as distinctly as a Finger Lakes Riesling or a Hudson Valley apple.

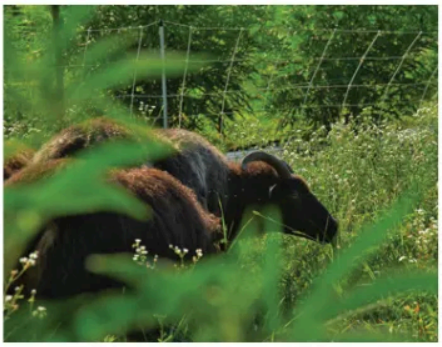
Quality from Field to Pre-Roll

Where many cannabis operations focus on flower sales, Supernaturals has built their reputation around pre-rolls—but not the industry-standard version made from trim and smaller buds. Their innovation lies in using what Beck calls "A-buds" for their pre-rolls, the same premium flower that others reserve for jars.

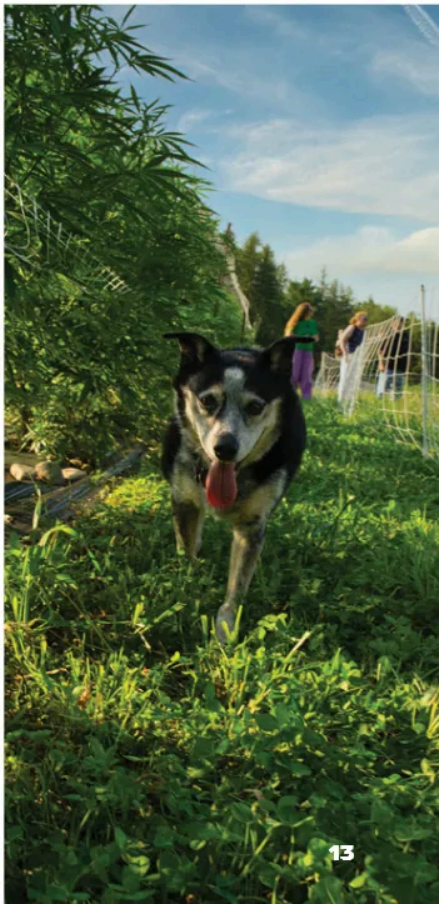
"The biggest difference of the industry standard is to take your A-buds and put them in jars as whole flower and then take your smalls and your trim and make your pre-rolls out of that," Beck explains. "That's why a lot of people get inconsistent pre-rolls from a lot of other brands, but ours are just solid great sun-grown flower from living soil."

This commitment to quality extends through every stage of production, from the insulated containers that maintain precise temperature and humidity during drying, to the hand-preparation and careful trimming that ensures each pre-roll burns perfectly. "You can ruin a lot of good weed by improper drying," Jens emphasizes.

The result is a product that customers recognize and return for. "We have a lot of people who are what I would think of as weed snobs tell me that it's the only pre-roll that they'll smoke," Beck reports.



Clockwise from top: sheep Houdini, Walnut and Hickory, their dog Okie, Lana Heintjes with Cashew and Princess Macadamia Nut, Jens Verhaegh with a recent harvest.



Peter Shafran, Paula Panzer, Beck Rourke-Mooney, Isaiah Montero, Lana Heintjes and Jens Verhaegh

The Art of Staggered Harvest

Traditional outdoor cannabis cultivation follows a single harvest schedule, with everything coming due in the fall rush. Supernaturals has reimagined this rhythm, creating what Jens calls "staggered harvest" through careful strain selection and auto-flowering varieties.

"This morning we were harvesting auto flowers and that's already our second harvest of the year," he explains during our early August interview. "We'll be doing three this year. Yeah, actually four."

For an outdoor grower, this represents both practical and philosophical advantages. "In terms of being an outdoor grower and having all the harvests come in all at once, it's overwhelming," Jens notes. "So being able to stagger it, it's sort of like hedging your bets if the weather's bad."

A Woman's Perspective

Beck's role at Supernaturals extends far beyond typical operations management. She translates Jens's cultivation vision into scalable business practices, manages compliance requirements, and represents the company throughout New York State's emerging cannabis market.

"When I first met Jens and he explained the brand to me, I was like, 'Oh, so it's like your essence,'" she recalls. "This brand is your essence. And he'll have the idea and the vision. And then we basically need to translate it into a bunch of steps that we can actually make happen."

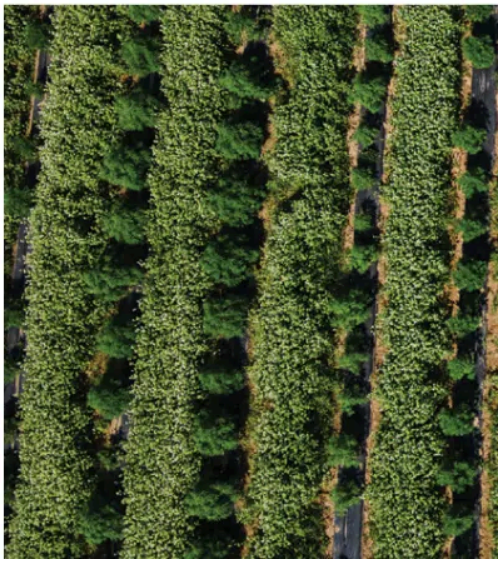
Being a woman in cannabis sales brings unique challenges. "My number one thing is immediately making it clear to whoever I'm speaking to that I know a lot about this plant and I know a lot about this subject matter so that I'm taken seriously," Beck explains. This expertise becomes a business advantage: "When I would tell them all this detail about botanical science, then they would buy it."

Building Community

Despite operating in a theoretically competitive market, Supernaturals embodies what cannabis advocate Jordan Eisenstadt calls "cooperatition"—the recognition that rising tides lift all boats, especially for small businesses navigating a heavily regulated industry.

"It's funny because it's not necessarily a competitive atmosphere," Jens reflects. "We're all small businesses and farms that are all just trying to survive."

This community extends beyond cannabis to the broader agricultural ecosystem. At the annual Rondout Valley Growers Association dinner, cannabis farmers sit alongside dairy farmers and vegetable growers, sharing the universal concerns that define agricultural life.



SUPERNATURALS
— NEW YORK —

The Future of Hudson Valley Bud

As cannabis cultivation matures in New York, Supernaturals represents a particular vision of what the industry might become: deeply rooted in place, committed to sustainable practices, and integrated with rather than separate from the region's agricultural heritage.

"I think there's a hope that the Hudson Valley [will be the] Napa Valley of the East," Beck suggests. "There's always going to be a big interest in the stuff that's coming out of our soil."

For Jens, success isn't measured in canopy square footage or production volume, but in the ability to maintain quality and values while building a sustainable business. "I didn't really want to grow 100,000 square feet," he reflects. "This is more my speed. This is how I want to have a cannabis business."

It's not over yet.
There's an extended version of this article online!

Scan the QR code whenever you see one at the end of an article to view the piece in its entirety.

Medicine from the Landscape

As afternoon shadows lengthen across the Supernaturals fields, Jens returns to the idea that first drew him to farming: the connection between place and well-being, between sustainable practices and superior products.

"It's like medicine from our landscape," he says, watching his sheep graze where cannabis plants grew last season. "Those herbs, like the honey, the foods that are grown around us, all of those things I think are more nourishing because this is where we live and this is where it's growing. So there's that synergy of stuff around us is like what's best for us."

In this vision, cannabis isn't an interloper in Hudson Valley agriculture but a natural extension of it—another crop that benefits from the region's soil, climate, and farming wisdom. At Supernaturals, the future of cannabis looks remarkably like its past: rooted in the land, connected to community, and committed to the patient work of growing something truly exceptional.

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Queenee Da Kritic

Black Widow Live Rosin by NYCE

A Hybrid That Hits Like an Indica

by Queenee

There's a moment, right before the dab, when the jar opens and the scent hits—and something in your body already knows what kind of experience you're about to have. What's that saying? *The Nose knows*. When I opened the jar of Black Widow, I expected a hybrid effect because it was so pungently floral, but what I got was a mouthful of gas and earthy tones.

The cold-cure badder looked rich and creamy, and the aroma gave off an earthy, skunky sweetness that had me expecting a sativa lift. But this one hit Indica-heavy and fast. I used a glass rig, and on the first inhale, the flavor came through smooth and citrusy with great lung expansion and not floral at all. Within minutes, I felt the tension leave my head, my gut relax, and my nervous system slow down.

This is the kind of rosin I reach for before a hot shower—to help relax and ease my pelvic pain that builds up from endometriosis and fibromyalgia. It helped control my inflammation and quieted my anxious overthinking brain, without knocking me out.

With 77.49% THC and 6.57% total terpenes, led by limonene, β-caryophyllene, and humulene, this strain delivers lasting relief and clarity. Behind the jar is NYCE, short for New York Concentrates & Extracts, based in Jamestown, NY. It's led by a second-generation firefighter who saw firsthand how cannabis could help heal a city torn by poverty and opioids. Now, they're crafting solventless rosin for the people—potent, pure, and priced right.

Black Widow is Queenee-approved medicine—solventless fire made with purity and intention.

Born and raised in the Bronx, Queenee is a Latina Canna-mom who turned pain into purpose. Dabbing didn't just help her manage pain—it transformed her. It gave her the power to heal, create, and lead.

queeneedakritic

RETAIL PROFILE

Strain Stars

Redefining Cannabis Retail on Long Island

by Lulu Cohen

Strain Stars has become a Long Island cannabis leader by combining diversity, community investment, and customer-focused retail.

1815 Broadhollow Rd, Farmingdale, NY

When New York launched its regulated cannabis program, the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) made Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion central to its mission. Applicants for retail licenses were evaluated not only on business plans but also on their commitment to communities disproportionately harmed by the War on Drugs.

On Long Island, rollout was slow. Of the region's thirteen towns, only four—Babylon, Brookhaven, Riverhead, and Southampton—initially allowed cannabis retail. Zoning rules, community concerns, and legal hurdles created challenges. Yet in Farmingdale, one dispensary quickly emerged as a leader: Strain Stars.

Founded by a family with a background in retail, Strain Stars entered the market determined to break stigmas and create a welcoming experience. As a minority-owned business, their story closely reflects the OCM's goal of building a diverse, inclusive industry.

"We wanted to create a space that felt approachable and informative," says owner Yuvraj Singh. "Our goal was to ensure everyone felt comfortable, and that meant changing traditional perceptions of what a dispensary looks like."

The company expanded from Farmingdale to Riverhead, tailoring each store to its local community. Singh emphasizes the importance of staff diversity and training. "We worked with the team to understand their customers and built a group who could connect with people across the region," he explains.

That investment extends beyond retail. Strain Stars partnered with Farmingdale State College to establish an annual $100,000 scholarship for students whose families were impacted by cannabis convictions. "We just awarded our first scholarship," Singh says. "It's open to any field of study, not just cannabis. For us, it's about opportunity."

Customer education remains a cornerstone of the business, resonating even with older demographics. "Senior customers showed openness to exploring the legal market, which has helped shift community attitudes," Singh adds. "We put a strong emphasis on staff training to ensure people get accurate, thoughtful information."

Strain Stars has also prioritized accessibility, offering delivery from Bellerose in Queens to Montauk. The combination of retail expertise, customer care, and community investment has made the company one of the most profitable dispensaries in New York.

"We navigated the complexities on Long Island and are evolving every day," Singh reflects. "Our vision is to grow while staying true to diversity, inclusion, and service."

Today, Strain Stars stands as both a market leader and a model for how cannabis businesses can thrive while staying rooted in the community.

RETAIL PROFILE

Trends Dispensary

Where Queens' Global Unity Meets Cannabis Culture

by Ranch Guerra Photography by Monica Vie

How a Long Island City dispensary is redefining community through conscious cannabis retail.

27-25 44th Dr, Long Island City, NY

Standing inside Trends in Long Island City, visitors are greeted by what owner Rodney Hurricane Carter describes as "the sweetest aromas, beautifully curated installations and friendly staff members looking to give customers the best experience in town." This isn't just another dispensary—it's what he described as "a wellness shop and cultural hub" that embodies Queens' legendary diversity.

"Queens raised me, so I already know you can't fake it out here," explains Rodney, whose no-nonsense approach reflects the borough's famously direct sensibility. "People don't want fluff, they want facts. That no-nonsense energy is part of our DNA at Trends."

This authenticity drives everything from staff training to customer interactions. Rather than simply selling cannabis, Trends prioritizes education and connection. As Rodney explains: "Our staff goes through ongoing training that's about more than product knowledge. We focus on cannabis history, cultural context, conscious language, and situational roleplay. It's about creating a highly intentional, judgment-free space where people from all walks of life feel welcomed and empowered, whether they're seasoned users or complete newcomers."

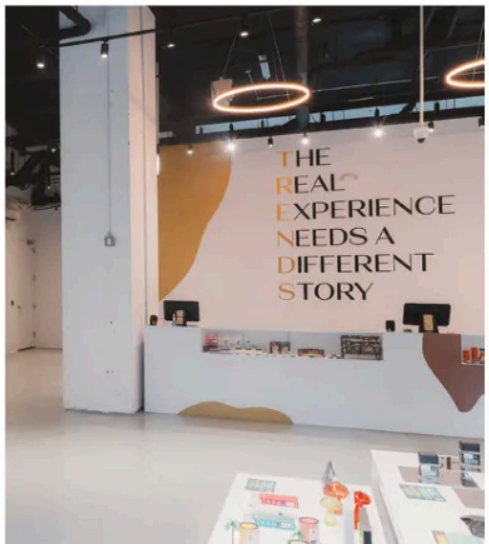
The innovation extends beyond traditional retail. Trends has collaborated with Canadian company Guide Rx, using AI technology to help educate consumers on which are the best products and strains for them to use based on whatever illness or ailment they may have. "Currently, we are the only dispensary in the country with this technology," Rodney notes.

They host ongoing educational event series like "Meet The Brands," bringing 20-25 brands together for community engagement, and "Shattering Stigmas," forums where industry leaders share experiences. "We're still battling decades of misinformation, racialized policies, and social taboos," Rodney reflects. "And as a Black business owner in Queens, I take that role seriously. Because if we do this right, we're not just building a brand, we're liberating the narrative."

This consciousness revolution philosophy permeates every detail in the shop. Located in what they call "the epicenter of New York in Long Island City," Trends serves customers from seasoned connoisseurs discussing terpene profiles to newcomers seeking relief. The approach is simple: "We don't push products, we offer guidance. We don't talk down to customers, we meet them where they are."

Rodney recommends Skyworld, Chunky Black, and Banzzy 1305—"brands that are NY and minority owned, but even more so it's fire. Top quality at all levels and a can't miss." After your visit to Trends, grab dinner at nearby Han Dynasty for Chinese cuisine or Jungly, which "serves up a dope fusion between Indian and American foods."

Looking ahead, Rodney sees the next five years as "a race for locations and stores looking to acquire market share and brand visibility as the cannabis industry grows. Trends will certainly be one of the leading players as our store can easily be the flagship of Queens." He adds, "We feel that New York is all about the culture, and we are in a great position to lead the wave."



The source for all things cannabis

New York Cannabis Product Reviews

by Peter Shafran, Ranch Guerra, John D'Angelo

Fall is the season of cozy rituals and intentional indulgence—the air turns crisp, leaves blaze with color, and evenings invite warmth, comfort, and connection. It's the perfect backdrop for exploring cannabis products that enhance both stillness and celebration. From a soothing honey stirred into tea on a quiet night, to a fruity vape that elevates a dance floor, to a decadent flower that balances energy and euphoria, these fall picks capture the season's essence: grounding, uplifting, and a little bit indulgent. Together, they show how cannabis can enrich the small rituals and big moments that make autumn unforgettable.

1

Brand: HoneyPot
Product: Night THC-Infused Organic Honey, 100mg THC/50mg CBD

I stirred in one teaspoon of HoneyPot into my chamomile tea on a stressful Sunday evening. The honey dissolved beautifully, adding rich floral sweetness. About 45 minutes later, the balanced 1:2 THC to CBD ratio delivered something special—gentle relaxation without the overwhelming couch lock. My shoulders melted, racing thoughts quieted, and I felt genuinely peaceful. Effects lasted 4-5 hours, transitioning into the best sleep I'd had in weeks with zero morning grogginess.

Tip: Perfect for cannabis newcomers seeking mellow, functional effects. The squeeze pouch makes dosing easy and mess-free. Start with half a teaspoon if you're new to edibles—you can always add more to your next cup of tea, but you can't take it back once consumed.

2

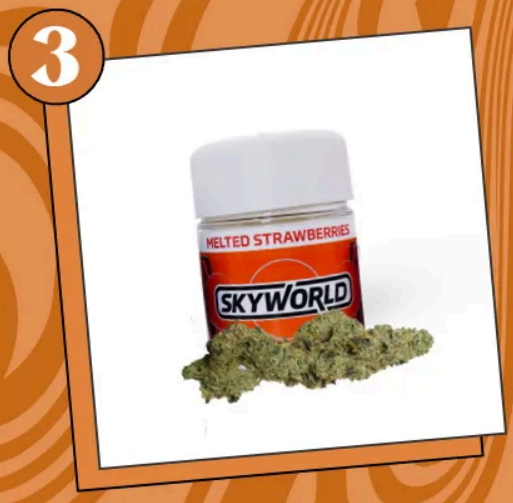
Brand: Ayrloom
Product: Lychee Dream 1g Disposable Vape

I ended up bringing three of these Ayrloom one-gram all-in-one vapes with me to Burning Man this Summer. New York's original and most popular infused beverage company certainly knows how to produce some high-quality vapes! "Lychee Dream" was a delight to be sipping on; light, sweet, and energizing. It only added positively to my experience dancing and raving, sunrise or sunset. I dig the green to white gradient color and the look/feel of the hardware. The battery didn't need a charge once, but the USB-C port was primed if I needed it. I appreciate when a brand puts in the work to make sure that the temperature of a hit is never too hot or too weak. I also like to share a vape with friends that doesn't knock them on their ass after one hit. Feedback on this Ayrloom vape, from a spectrum of folks I've partied with, has been that one to three hits has them feeling perfect. Ready to try all the flavors next!

3

Brand: Skyworld
Product: Melted Strawberries, 3.5g

If the strain, Headband, is the classic crown that made you feel like royalty, Skyworld's Melted Strawberries is the jeweled upgrade; a luxury tiara dipped in strawberry glaze and jet fuel. Think Headband's fuel-forward punch, but with a fruity, almost decadent overlay. The nose is all strawberries and cream at first whiff. As I consumed more, I started to catch garlic and diesel undertones. That signature "halo effect" head pressure? It's here, and then some. Melted Strawberries starts with an uplifting cerebral rush, wrapping around your temples like Mr. Miyagi's headband. Where Headband leans dreamy and hazy, Melted Strawberries is more energetic and playful. At 34% THC, it's indulgent, potent, and perfectly balanced.



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HIGH PRAISE

by Kait Caridi

Let's talk about dry mouth. It's not cute. It's bad for your teeth, your breath, and honestly, your vibe. Thankfully, Flintts Mints exist! Not just another mint, these are quick-dissolving tablets made with real plant magic that naturally stimulate saliva and leave your mouth feeling alive.

At the heart of Flintts is the Spilanthes flower, the "toothache plant" as this natural botanical is known. This little floral powerhouse is what gives Flintts Mints their signature "sparkle": a mouth-tingling, slightly buzzy sensation that wakes up your salivary glands like nothing else. It's weird, wild, and seriously addictive (in the best way). If you've never felt it before, you're in for a sensory surprise!

Each mint is formulated to kickstart saliva production, helps fight bad breath, supports healthy gums, and generally leaves your mouth feeling clean and refreshed.

Unlike traditional mints or gums, Flintts are sugar-free yet still perfectly sweet thanks to ingredients like non-GMO isomalt and sucralose which don't wreck your teeth or spike your blood sugar. They've managed to hit that sweet spot without compromising on taste or function.

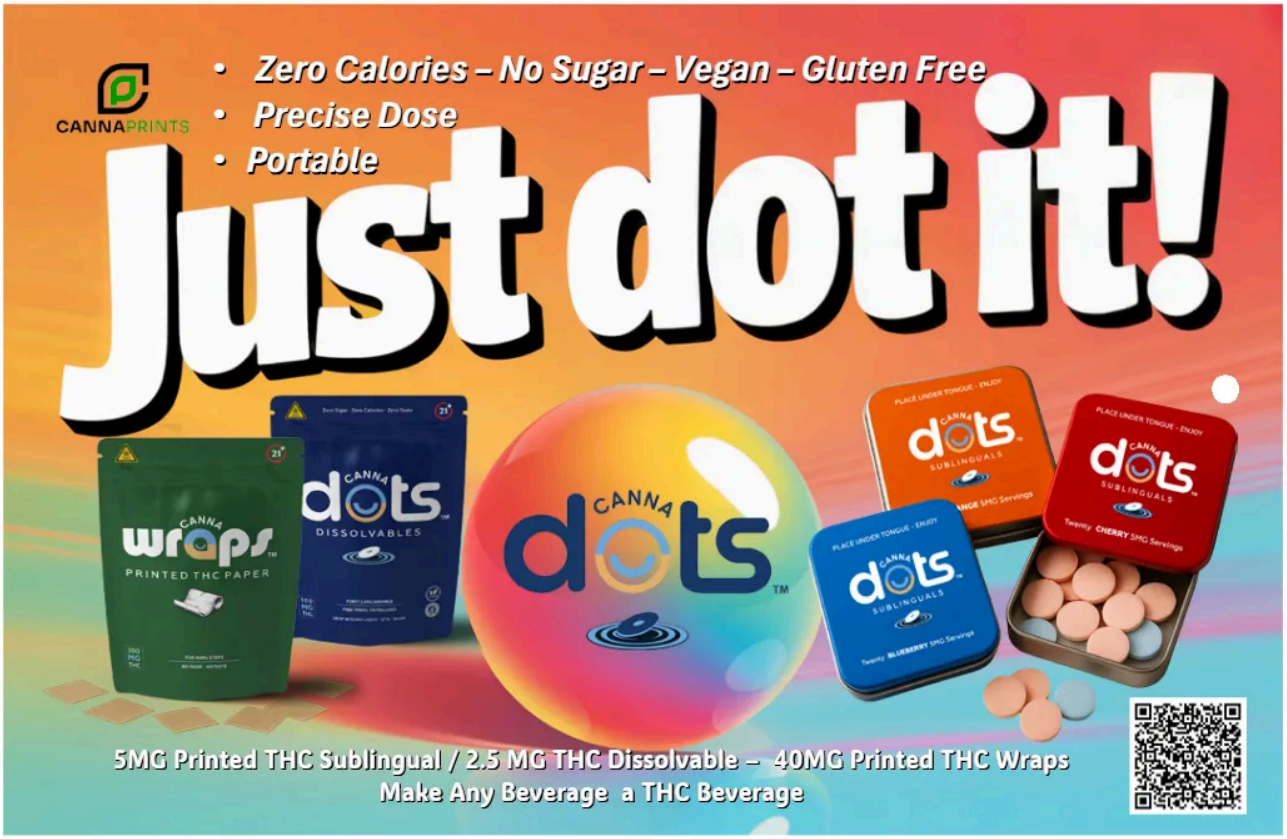
Speaking of taste, Flintts Mints come in a range of fun, functional flavors (nine to be exact) all made from real ingredients. Lemon is made from actual lemons. Ginger is gingery. Cinnamon hits with spice. Each flavor comes with its own "F Strength" rating which tells you how much mouth-watering and sparkle to expect. The higher the F Strength, the stronger the buzz and the more intense the salivation. It's a choose-your-own-adventure moment every time you pop one in your mouth.

What also stands out is the brand's commitment to sustainability. Flintts are packaged in zero plastic. That's a rare flex in the world of consumables and it makes supporting this product feel even better.

Whether you're battling dry mouth, looking to elevate your oral health routine, or just love a mint that does more, Flintts Mints deliver. They're vegan, sugar-free with no major allergens, and made from just a handful of clean ingredients.

Knowing Rus, the founder, this product is more than just functional—it's intentional. There's real care in how Flintts are crafted from the ingredients to the packaging to the whole mouth-watering experience.

Bottom line: if your mouth is dry, your taste buds are bored, or you just want to feel something different, give Flintts Mints a go!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Multidisciplinary artist born and raised in Mexico City, and based in New York since 2018, Majo San's work is a collection of projects ranging from murals, paintings, installations and tattoos. Community, nature and the exploration of our minds and how we relate with our world and reality are the main things that drive her.
Her pieces are contemplations about her spiritual practice rooted in Tibetan Buddhism Philosophy, her experience with nature, and the relationship between what we perceive and what is actually there.
She believes everything is connected in continuous change and aims to remind and be reminded of this connection.
Textures and organic elements play a protagonist role in her visual code, having always found nature as her biggest inspiration.
She invites the viewer to not only see nature, but to feel it, and in that way, go deeper and strengthen our connection to the universe.
majo_san

HIGH EXPOSURE AGENCY

THE HIGH-LITE RANCH GUERRA

by Annette Fernandez and Kassia Graham

The High-Lite is a series created by the High Exposure Agency to shine a light on the advocates, founders, farmers, legislators, dispensary owners, processors (and more) who are building the New York cannabis market.

Ranch Guerra is CEO of The Other Magazine. He is an adventurer, poet, events promoter, DJ, decriminalization advocate, and a believer in the power of print media.

Why have you staked your claim in the cannabis industry?
In 2010, while I was a senior in college at Boston University, I was arrested for first-offense non-violent drug charges for the distribution of cocaine, psilocybin, and cannabis. I served 20 months in county jail, followed by two years of parole and probation. During that time, I completed my journalism degree and experienced the employment pains of being a felon in the United States. In 2015, I moved to Colorado, where I was able to utilize my skills in media, sales, and events in the legal cannabis industry. I began to feel safe sharing my story and started advocating on behalf of decriminalization and ending the War on Drugs.

How can cannabis media inform consumers about cannabis justice?
For the last eight years I was part of a national cannabis lifestyle magazine that seldom published stories about cannabis justice and social equity organizations. When we started The Other, I knew we had to commit to sharing this work locally and nationally. Until the people and the plant are free everywhere, there will be stories that the public needs to read.

What has been the most exciting thing you have covered in the New York market?
The fact that so many of our Retail Profiles articles about NYC, Long Island, and Hudson Valley licensed businesses are about owners and operators who were disproportionately impacted by the criminality of cannabis has been the most exciting thing for me about covering this market.

What is your favorite strain?
When I lived in Denver, I cultivated about 20 plants in my garage for a year. My friend gave me some Papaya cuts. I found out it was the perfect strain for me, both body and mind!

What is your favorite form of consumption? Made in Xiaolin's cannagar is still the best high I've ever had. After a decade, Storz and Bickel's Volcano is my favorite way to get high. An old fashioned cypher with friends; on the stoop, in the staircase… just jays and jokes floating around.

Highly Eventful

Cannabis consumers and industry members are a diverse lot. As such there are various events geared towards their wants and needs. Here are a few organizations leading the charge.

Hudson Valley Cannabis Roll Call

The Hudson Valley Cannabis Roll Call connects plant touching and ancillary cannabis professionals in the local and surrounding areas, which is a hotbed of diverse activity in the New York market. The founders endeavor to foster community building and collaborative practices.

ON THE REVEL

Founded in 2016, ontherevel has produced accessible and engaging events which brings together industry members and consumers. Their events including Revelry Festival and Buyers' Club are two of the most popular East Coast cannabis events frequented by guests from across the nation.

WORK•N•ROLL

Entering the market as a cannabis co-working workspace, Work'n'Roll used its industry and cultural access to pivot into creating events which elevate the status of brands. Their Budtender XP events help to connect established and emerging brands with New York's budtenders.

Harvesting What You've Sown

Fall Rituals for Gratitude and Release

Pause to honor your growth, release what no longer serves, and enter the cooler months with gratitude.

by Asa Angel

During the autumn season, we see cultures around the world, past and present, taking this time to pause, reflect, and celebrate the bounty created throughout the year.

As we move from the activity of summer, our energies begin to turn toward the quieter months ahead. Agricultural communities in particular have used this time to pause during this season to reflect on what worked and what didn't, as well as to give thanks and celebrate the abundance provided.

Even though many of us now live more distant from the land, our bodies and minds are still connected to the natural cycles. This is a time to look back on all that we've accomplished in the past year, to consider what supported us, and to notice what we might want to shift for the year ahead. One thing our ancestors understood, and that we can learn from, is the importance of pausing to celebrate ourselves and to savor all that has been achieved.

Celebration is often overlooked in our future-oriented, goal-driven culture, yet it is essential for sustaining health and for reaching future goals. Our bodies are wired with reward systems, and when we honor our efforts, it boosts motivation and life satisfaction. Conversely, skipping over celebration can increase stress, burnout, and a decline in overall well-being.

Our ancient ancestors used to observe anywhere from eight week-long celebrations to 120 festival days over the course of the year. They understood what we have seemed to forget: that celebration is not a frivolous activity but one that nourishes our minds, bodies, and spirits.

As the harvest season calls us to gather what has grown, it also invites us to gather our own lessons and victories. We can carry forward what nourishes us, release what no longer serves, and take time to truly acknowledge how far we've come.

With that in mind, here are some simple ways you might honor this season and celebrate yourself:

1 HARVEST TABLE

Create a small altar or display with seasonal fruits, leaves, photos, and objects that represent the abundance in your life. Take time to reflect on these objects and open up to the feeling of gratitude permeating through your body, healing and nourishing you.

2 JOY FEAST

Prepare a meal with foods that feel like a personal reward and invite friends or family to share in the celebration. Encourage everyone to take turns sharing their wins from the year and honor how far you all have come.

3 RELEASE RITUAL

Write down the things that didn't align or didn't work out this year, thank them for the lessons they brought, and burn or bury the paper as a symbolic release. Celebrate the courage it takes to step into the unknown as you shape the life you want.

These practices can help remind us that everything we think, feel, love, and know right now is the result of our past choices and the experiences we've carried along the way. We can consciously influence who we are becoming, rather than leaving it to the whims of fate and habit.

Each day is a new opportunity to choose. Each year is an invitation to grow more aligned with what makes you feel alive.

May this harvest season bring you clarity, joy, and rest. May you honor all that has grown within you, release what no longer serves, and step into the quiet months ahead with gratitude and ease.

Headliners: Dee Diggs

by Pasquale Zinna

Q: You've been at the nexus of NYC's dancefloor scenes for quite a while now, and more recently on the move between American and European dancefloor epicenters. What's the musical state of play right now? What are the driving rhythms in these spaces from your perspective?

A: Everyone is craving something familiar. I'm hearing a lot of edits, remixes, or refixed versions of old pop hits, and references to online culture samples or songs that have come back to the top of the cultural zeitgeist because of a TikTok sound or video meme format. Rhythmically, the trends are all over the map, but I hear many DJs and producers trying to push into new genres & create new sonic mixtures of their influences. Innovation is how we got the music we love, so I'm all for it.

I've always been the kind of music collector and DJ that likes being on my own wave of nostalgia, which is hyper-specific and ever-roving. All that to say, I still love old music, but being too steeped in being or playing obscure is very head-scratchy and not vibey for the party. It's about connecting those special interest niches.

Q: The social zeitgeist has evolved quite a bit since you first took over the decks; what's your perspective on the social side of the dancefloor? Where are the people at?

A: I was telling my friend on the phone today that I like having a blend of gay parties, queer parties, and a broader mixed crowd. It's important that queer cultural leaders cross boundaries and [...] share the culture behind how and why we party like this, by gathering to dance together and sharing a legacy of sound.

New York has given me so many inspiring experiences that have shaped this perspective. I love the feeling of being on the dance floor in fluid motion with people of all ages, sizes, and sexualities, all coexisting and moving with each other like water droplets in the ocean.

What I do know is this: it is vital for us to connect to one another, especially during such a heavy time in the world. The dance floor is a place where this can happen. If it's not just used as an escape route or for hedonism, it can be a powerful connector and can teach us so much.

Q: Given the storied roots of Queer and BIPOC influence over electronic and dance-centric music, how do you view the current dynamics in the producer and DJ space?

A: I'm going to sound jaded in this one, but I still see a lot of fakers, phonies, and cronies riding the coattails of the real innovators in their sound, and yet, THEY have all the fans and the money and the sold-out gigs because they are younger, whiter, or somehow more marketable. It's not working. We hear them repeat the same "House and Techno is Black and Queer music" quote in interviews, and then what comes after the lip service? NOTHING.

I try to focus on using what influence I have to give out flowers to those who have inspired me and those who have been overlooked. I try to mention names and show the connections that pushed my evolution as a creative.

Q: Your style veers between high-energy, modern house motifs and the profile of disco-soul classics coupled with world dance rhythms. Where do you draw your inspiration from? What are you channeling your own music towards?

A: My signature blend has to do with the crossroads of the identities that I harbor. I'm a first-generation Liberian-American queer dark-skinned black androgynous-leaning cis-woman. I grew up singing in church and school choirs in South Carolina. I left there for college at Boston University, where I did college radio and traveled in Europe a bit. From there, I found myself still itching at my lifelong dream of living in New York City, so I did that too.

My inspiration comes from the reverence I have for the music, the human essence, and creative energy in these recorded sessions–which is the soul of the music. [...] My process of making music also adheres to producing music that has a story and an intention.

In all things I do, I am channeling the divine feminine, connecting to the source energy that exists in all living things, the movement, the kinetic energy that keeps us alive, and by pure expression putting it into a sound, an audible experience. After 10 years of DJing, I know that's my purpose for doing this, that's my magic touch, presenting music that touches your soul, that stirs it up, and soothes it down.

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SIPS FOR YOUR SESH

Fall-Ready Mocktails from an Herb-Loving Bartender

by Ross Elliott

As a bartender who's also an avid cannabis consumer, I'm often asked what I'd drink when I'm smoking. While I can't advocate for crossfading, there are always delicious, simple, nonalcoholic beverages I love indulging in. I wanted to offer seasonal options where everyone will find something they vibe with. Happy Fall + Spooky Season!

Combine 3 chopped peaches, ¼ cup of honey, and ½ cup water to a pot and bring it to a boil, stirring everything together until the peaches are mushy (about 15 minutes). Strain out the solids, then add 1.5 ounces of that syrup, 1.5 ounces of fresh lemon juice, and ice in a Collins glass. Top with soda water. Effervescent, clean, and refreshing.

Add 4 blackberries, half a lime cut into wedges, and a teaspoon of maple syrup into a glass. Smash it together as best you can, then add ice, top with soda water, and garnish with a mint sprig you slapped between your hands. This is that drink you want when you get cottonmouth—fruity, herbaceous, and quenching.

Simmer apple cider with a cinnamon stick, fresh ginger, and a tablespoon of brown sugar (15 minutes minimum, don't go longer than an hour!). Serve hot with ground cinnamon overtop for those cold, late night smoke sessions. You could also serve iced, or top it with ginger beer for a NA Moscow Mule! Warming, spicy, and soothing.

For my coffee lovers, if you've never had an iced espresso or cold brew with tonic and a twist of lemon, it will change your post-smoke, post-dinner experience! You can trust me: I'm a bartender! These are all super customizable! Swap soda and tonic if you prefer! Only have limes or lemons? Either work! Use different fruit, etc.

COOKING WITH CANNABIS

Braised Oxtail with Pumpkin Polenta

by Chef MiGs. Restauranteur & Food Consultant

Servings: 4 | Prep: 45 min | Cook: 2.5 hours
Infusion: 30 min
(2–4mg THC per serving)

Oxtail represents both patience and reward. My mother reserved this dish for special occasions, and it would fill our house with the scent of slow-braised meat and warm spices. This autumnal interpretation honors those roots while embracing seasonal ingredients. The tender, fall-apart oxtail pairs harmoniously with silky pumpkin polenta, enhanced through cannabis infusion.

INGREDIENTS:

For the Oxtail:

1¼ pounds oxtail, expertly trimmed
½ medium yellow onion, diced fine
1 scallion, diced fine
2 cups beef stock (or bone broth)
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
½ tablespoon fresh ginger, minced
½ scotch bonnet pepper (optional)
2 tablespoons dark rum (optional)
2 tablespoons brown sugar
½ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon fresh cracked pepper
2 garlic cloves, minced
½ large carrot, diced
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
½ tablespoon dried thyme
½ tablespoon dried oregano
1 tablespoon cannabutter or ghee

For the Polenta:

1 cup whole milk
⅓ cup fine semolina polenta
1 tablespoon regular butter
½ tablespoon cannabutter
¼ cup roasted pumpkin purée (or premium canned)
¼ cup aged pecorino romano, grated
⅛ teaspoon fresh nutmeg

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Make the Cannabutter: Preheat oven to 200°F. Break up 1-2 grams of cannabis flower and spread on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes until fragrant and lightly golden. Infuse by adding decarbed flower to melted butter in a small saucepan. Simmer on lowest heat for 10 minutes—don't let it bubble aggressively. Strain through fine mesh, pressing solids gently.

2. Prepare: Season oxtails generously with thyme, oregano, salt, pepper, and apple cider vinegar. Let marinate for 30 minutes.

3. Sear: In a heavy-bottomed pot, brown oxtails in cannabutter for 6–8 minutes per side until deeply caramelized, then set aside.

4. Aromatic Base: In the same pot, sauté onions, garlic, carrots, scotch bonnet, and brown sugar until caramelized, 3–4 minutes.

5. Braise: Add rum to deglaze the pot, scraping up any browned bits. Add beef stock, Worcestershire sauce, and browned oxtails. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat, cover partially, and cook for 1½ to 2 hours until the meat falls easily from the bone.

6. Prepare Polenta: Bring milk to a gentle boil. Stir in regular butter and pumpkin purée until smooth. Gradually whisk in polenta, cooking 8–10 minutes until thick. Finish with cannabutter, aged pecorino, and fresh nutmeg.

7. Plate & Enjoy: Spoon the silky, canna-kissed polenta into warmed bowls. Nestle the fall-apart oxtail alongside, then ladle the glossy, aromatic braising liquid generously over everything. The aromatics will hit before the first bite.

Chef Miguel serves as the creative force behind 99th Floor, an innovative cannabis-themed fine dining and private catering experience prominently featured in The New York Times. His culinary expertise has graced the Cooking Channel, Food Network, NBC, Fox, ABC, CBS, VICE, and GMA Network.

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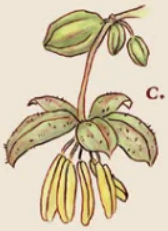
Illustrating Cannabis

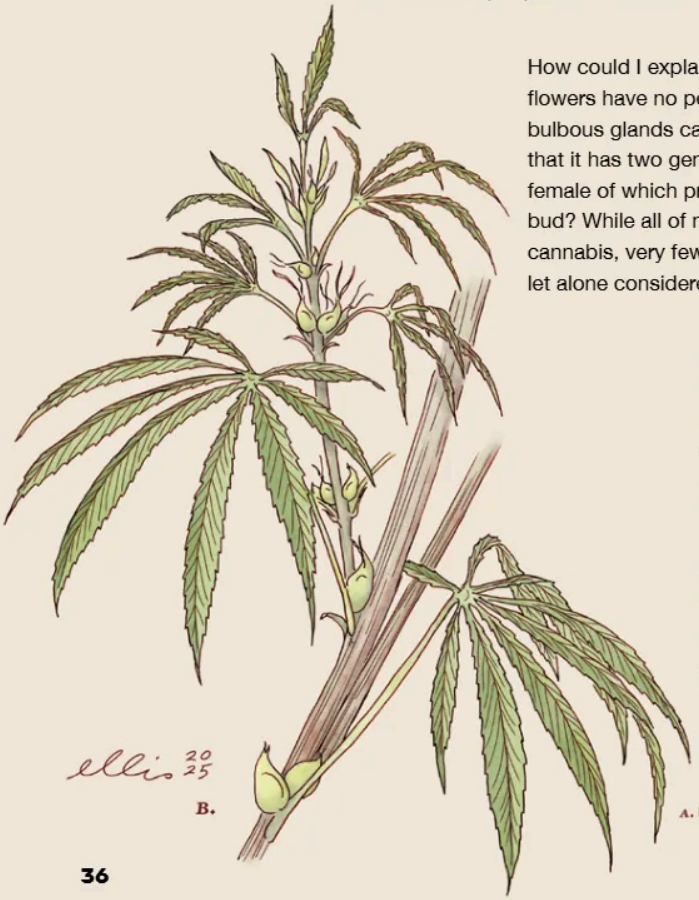
How Botanical Art Brings the Plant to Life

by Stuart Sherman **Illustrated by Erin Ellis**

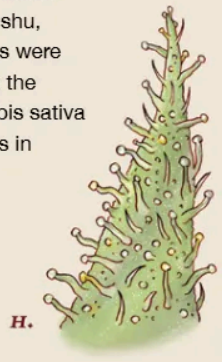


When I founded my cannabis home grow shop, *All Things Grow*, I knew teaching new growers would be our most important mission. I also knew that one of the greatest tools for any teacher is strong visuals. I was fortunate to have been introduced to the wonder of botanical art through my friend, the late Anna Laurent, and her book *The Botanical Wall Chart*. A photograph may be worth a thousand words, but a botanical illustration can convey the exact message a teacher needs people to understand.

How could I explain to students that cannabis flowers have no petals, that the plant grows bulbous glands called trichomes, and that it has two genders, only the female of which produces the smokable bud? While all of my students had smoked cannabis, very few had seen the plant itself, let alone considered its biology.



History is filled incredible examples of botanical cannabis art. From the first known cave drawing of cannabis from 10,000 BC in Kyushu, Japan, until the Middle Ages, most drawings were crude. It wasn't until the Enlightenment that the images became scientifically useful. Cannabis sativa received its scientific name by Carl Linnaeus in *Species Plantarum*, but it was illustrator Elizabeth Blackwell who gave us its first accurate rendering in 1737's *Herbarium Blackwellianum* where she mapped out the structure of the plant in full color.

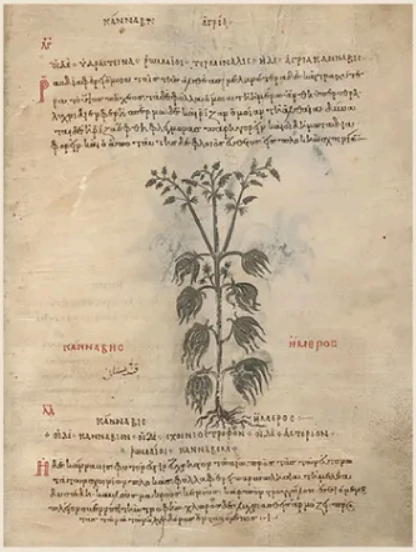


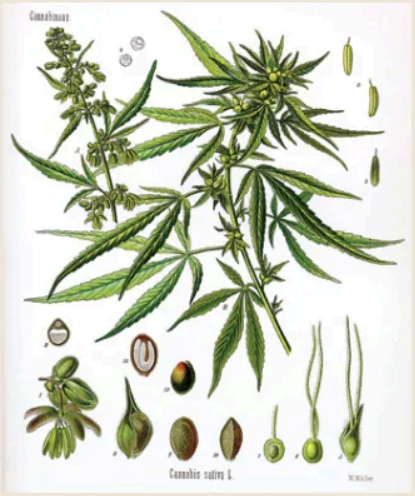
A. Male Cannabis plant B. Female Cannabis plant C. Male flower with pollen sacs D. Female flower with stigma
E. Mature male flower F. Cola G. Cross section of female flower with ovule and bracht H. Trichomes

As botany grew into its own field of study, botanical illustration gained greater significance in the 19th century, and a golden age for wall charts flourished. These diagrams, used to teach students about plant anatomy, were large enough to be seen from the back of a classroom and detailed enough to structure a lesson around. However, during botany's growth as a scientific discipline, cannabis, with its atypical anatomy, was not the ideal teaching tool for budding botanists. Cannabis illustrations appeared mostly in pharmacopeias and collections by physicians and herbalists, who were more interested in the plant's medicinal properties than its botanical structures.

Irish physician W.B. O'Shaughnessy was the first to introduce cannabis into modern Western medicine. After O'Shaughnessy joined the East India company to study medicine in India, he created a beautiful illustration in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1839) which explored the impact of "Indian Hemp, or Gunjah" on the treatment of tetanus and convulsive disorders.

The late 19th-century produced numerous botanical illustrations of cannabis highlighting either medicinal or commercial hemp applications. Edward Hamilton's *Flora Homoeopathica* (1853) featured a full-color illustration capturing the delicacy of the plant's fern green leaves. German botanical illustrator Walther Otto Müller drew an incredible depiction of the cannabis life cycle in full color, found in Franz Eugen Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflantzen* (1887). Slovene botanist and writer Martin Cilenšek's 1892 work *Naše škodljive Rastline* presented a detailed pen-and-ink of the male and female plants. Finally, I found a 1897 woodblock print by a German publishing house Bibliographisches, focusing on usable tree fiber plants, that appeared inspired by Müller's work from a decade earlier. In the top corner, adjacent to agave and a palm tree, is a meticulous illustration of both genders, with depiction of pollen sacs and female flowers, and detailed depictions of trichomes.



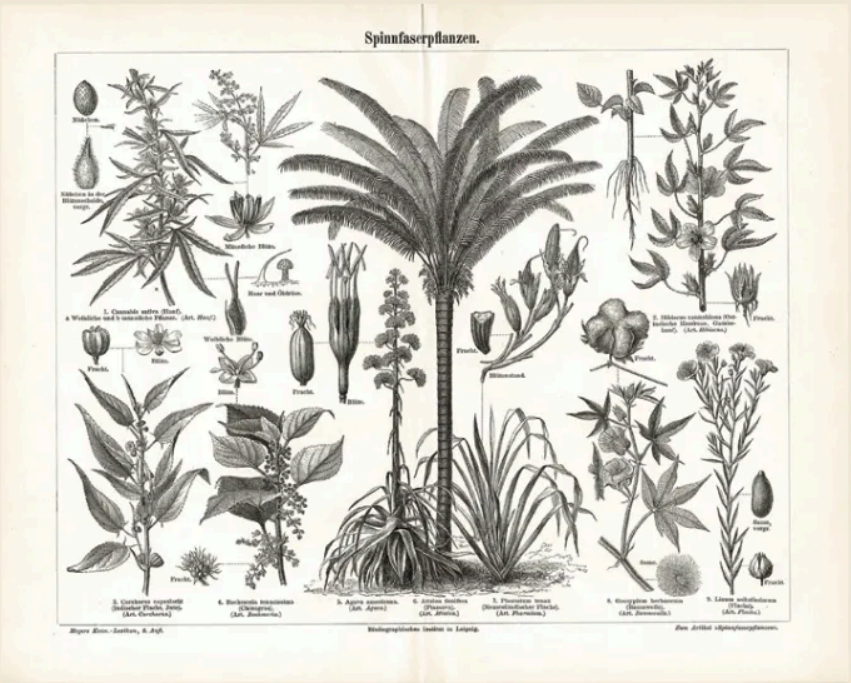


While these were beautiful illustrations, none represented the perfect teaching tool. As a result, none contained all the elements I needed for my classes. I needed something that could serve as a single source for multiple points about cannabis and growing while also being visually engaging for students.

Months after starting my business, I knew I needed an amazing botanical illustrator. Fortunately, through Anna, I knew one: Erin Ellis. While my small business barely had enough money to make rent, I knew commissioning her was essential. I called her immediately.

A few months later, after numerous studies, Erin completed her work (on previous page). It has since become the centerpiece of our cannabis classes. With one beautiful illustration, we can teach the basics of cannabis botany. Beyond a teaching tool, the chart is a standalone work of art, one I hope will spread to g rowers worldwide as they learn about the remarkable plant known as Cannabis sativa.

Scan the QR code to see the full article.



LOUD and PROUD

New Docuseries Illuminates Queer Cannabis Culture

by Veronica "Vee" Castillo

Justin Simien–visionary, filmmaker, and actor behind acclaimed projects *Dear White People*, *Bad Hair*, Disney's *Haunted Mansion*, and *Hollywood Black*–has broken new ground with *Loud & Proud*, a much needed short-form docuseries that celebrates the intersection of queer identity and cannabis culture. This new project from Simien's Emmy-nominated production company, Culture Machine, launches weekly on social media platforms, partnering with criminal justice nonprofit Last Prisoner Project to amplify voices historically excluded from mainstream cannabis narratives.

Loud & Proud is produced by Izzi Cavotta, Kaylen Ng, and Merari Chavarría, centered on the experiences of queer people who have long turned to cannabis not merely for recreation, but for healing and survival. The series features drag artists and activists including Laganja Estranja, Jorgeous, and Sabbyiana. It brings stories that connect anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, cannabis policing, and systemic inequity while celebrating queer joy, protest, and community care.

Pictured below: Jorgeous

Jay Jackson aka Laganja Estranja

The docu-series was born from Simien's commitment to marginalized voices. "In this industry, the kinds of stories I'm drawn to, the ones about communities pushed to the margins, are often the hardest to get funded," Simien explains. True to the grassroots spirit that launched *Dear White People* from a viral trailer made with his tax return, Culture Machine approached *Loud & Proud* with the same determination.

During their research, Simien and his team started noticing a pattern: queer people were instrumental in legalizing medical cannabis, yet this contribution remains somewhat hidden. "We knew we had to tell it, to make it part of the cultural record," he says. The partnership with Last Prisoner Project grounds this celebration in real advocacy, ensuring the series doesn't just entertain but actively confronts the systems attempting to erase queer resistance.

Simien's approach to complicated social narratives has evolved since his earlier work, emphasizing balance between harsh realities and celebration. He says: "I've learned over time that if you only talk about oppression, you risk reinforcing it. And if you only talk about joy, you risk glossing over the fight that made it possible. The sweet spot is when you put those two truths in conversation."

Loud & Proud takes what Simien calls a "mixtape" approach: the protest track and the dance track live side-by-side to tell the full story. This balance reflects Culture Machine's consistent approach of making work that's as beautiful and entertaining as it is socially sharp.

For Simien, the project represents a personal intersection. He shares: "I happen to be out and proud, and I also enjoy the devil's lettuce quite a bit. It has found its way into my creative process, my self-care routines, and I think there's a really interesting political intersection with communities of color and queer communities."

Loud & Proud stands as a testament to Simien's belief that joy itself is a radical act, deserving equal spotlight alongside struggle. Through this docuseries, Culture Machine continues its mission of ensuring the real change makers remain at the center of every story worth telling.

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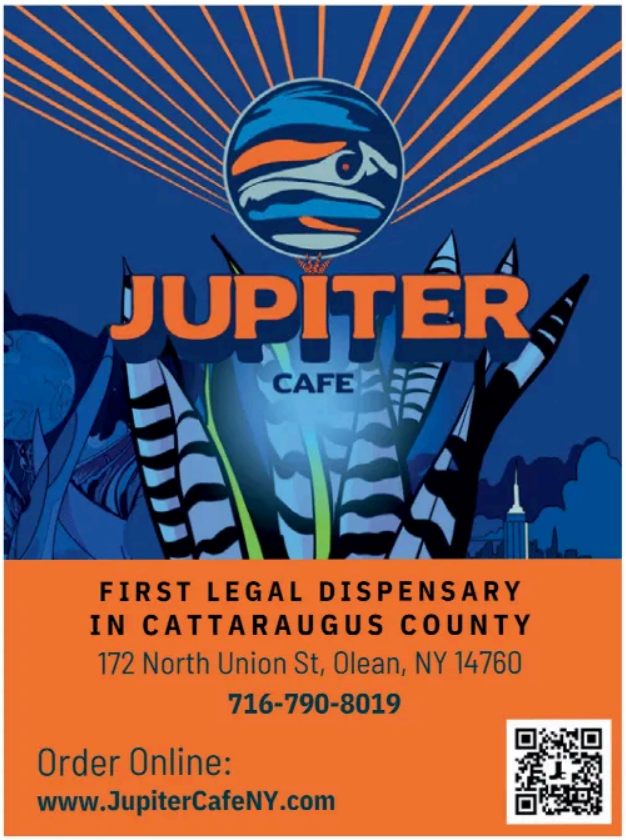
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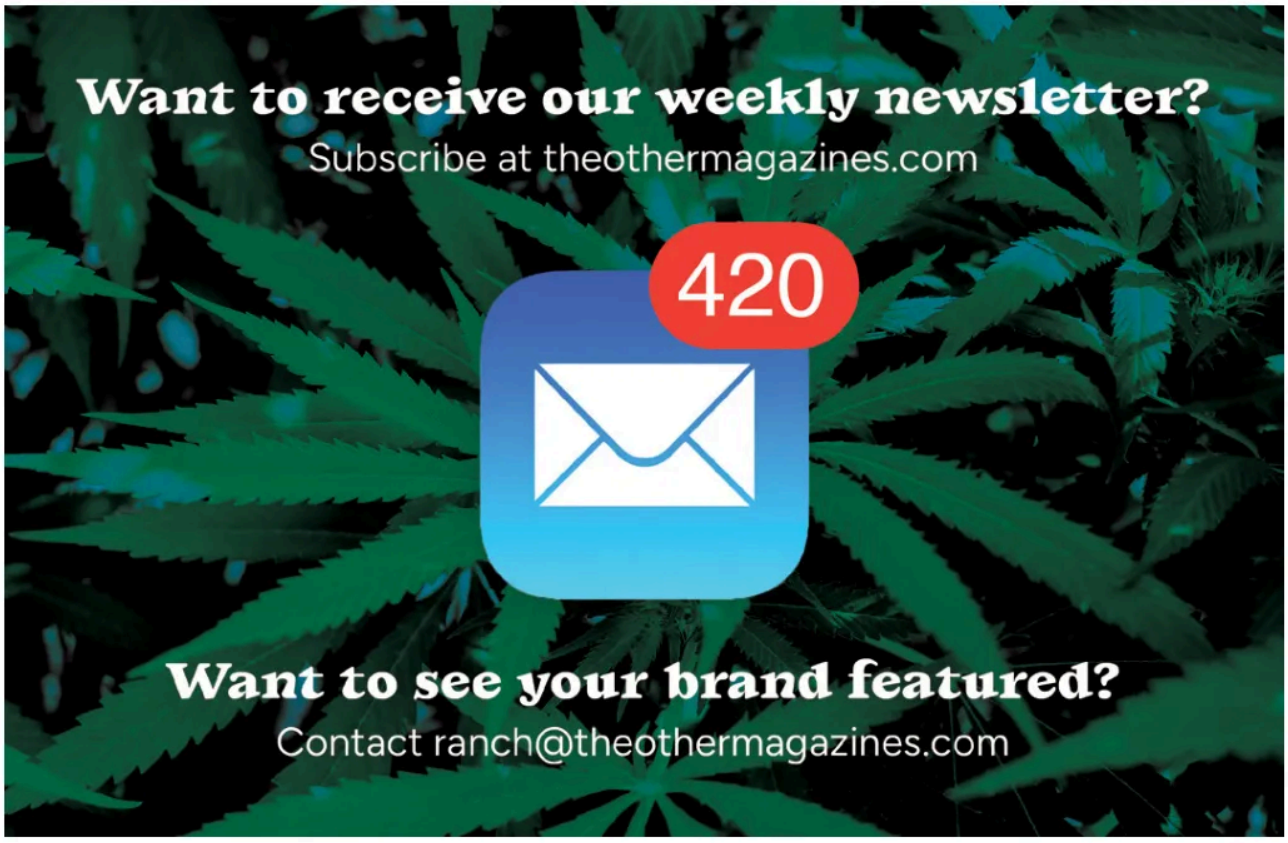
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PARTNER CONTENT

THE CANNABIS EDUCATOR

How Higher Function is Professionalizing the Concentrate Experience

In cannabis retail's rapidly evolving landscape, one company is quietly revolutionizing how dispensaries approach their highest-margin category. Higher Function, founded by educator Erik, specializes in transforming budtenders from order-takers into concentrate consultants.

The problem is significant: while concentrates represent premium products commanding more than $80 per gram, most dispensary staff lack the knowledge to confidently sell them. "Most budtenders can discuss flower extensively, but when it comes to concentrates, many don't even know what it is," Erik explains.

Higher Function's solution centers on comprehensive budtender training using their T.E.R.P. method (Talk, Educate, Recommend, Personalize). Staff learn to distinguish between live rosin and live resin.

The results are dramatic. At Nightjar Dispensary, Higher Function's program drove 1,500% sales increases for featured concentrate brands.

At Anja—a Higher Function Trained and Certified Dispensary—properly educated staff drive meaningful sales increases through knowledge and consultation. "Training is an investment that pays dividends," notes Ally Verello from Anja's management team. "When our staff can confidently explain why someone should choose live rosin over distillate, or help a customer understand e-rig options, it completely transforms the transaction."

For sophisticated consumers, this education removes barriers to cannabis craftsmanship. Quality concentrates offer unparalleled flavor, smooth vapor, and precise effects—but only when properly understood and consumed.

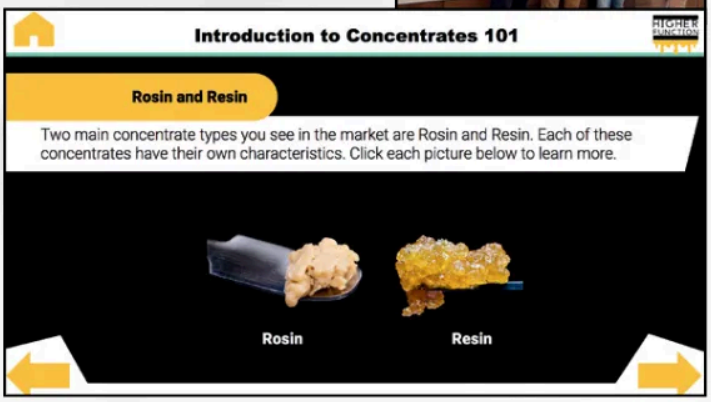
"We're creating concentrate consultants who can guide customers through the most sophisticated category in cannabis retail," Erik concludes. As New York's market matures beyond simple transactions toward consultative service, Higher Function represents the future: informed, intentional, and profitable.

Higher Function offers budtender training and customer education experiences throughout the Northeast.

HIGHER FUNCTION

Education & Experiences that Build Knowledge & Grow Sales

- Customer Classes
- Budtender Trainings
- Brand Experiences


Introduction to Concentrates 101
Rosin and Resin
Two main concentrate types you see in the market are Rosin and Resin. Each of these concentrates have their own characteristics. Click each picture below to learn more.
Rosin
Resin

"The Higher Function elevated my staff. The 'Concentrates Education' Certification armed us with the know-how to engage customers about concentrates. There is no alternative out there to train and educate this way– we partner with Higher Function at any opportunity!"

Spencer Belz, COO
SunnyTien Dispensary & Lounge
Atlantic City, NJ

admin@thehigherfunction.com

www.thehigherfunction.com

thehigherfunction

ELEVATED AUTUMN EXPERIENCES

by Rachel Port & Peter Shafran

A curated guide to heightened fall activities across NYC, Hudson Valley, and Long Island. Some of these cannabis and/or psychedelics-friendly destinations were chosen by our fall guide contest winners, plus additional selections from The Other team. From apple orchards to visionary art spaces, discover sophisticated autumn adventures recommended by readers who know where to find the perfect blend of culture, nature, and elevation.

Art Omi

International sculpture and architecture park featuring rotating outdoor installations. Contemporary art meets Hudson Valley's natural beauty.

artomi.org

Submitted by: Beck Rourke-Mooney

Chapel of Sacred Mirrors

Visionary art sanctuary featuring Alex Grey's consciousness-expanding artwork. Transformative gallery experience designed specifically for heightened contemplation.

cosm.org

Dia: Beacon

Minimalist art in a transformed industrial space creates meditative experiences. Large-scale contemporary installations perfect for altered viewing and reflection.

diaart.org

Olana

Frederic Church's Persian-inspired castle with panoramic Hudson River views. The artist's designed landscape creates perfect contemplative spaces.

olana.org

Submitted by: Beck Rourke-Mooney

Storm King Art Center

Monumental sculptures across 500 rolling acres where art meets sky and landscape. Perfect for elevated exploration among works by Calder and Maya Lin.

stormking.org

Beak + Skiff

Apple picking with cannabis-friendly vibes and "munchies galore with the prettiest views from the orchard." Home to ayrloom beverages and farm experiences.

beakandskiff.com

Submitted by: Shelby Poole

Blue Arrow Farm

Entertainment venue and animal rescue sanctuary with live music events. Unique farm experience combining agricultural activities with elevated cultural programming.

bluearrowfarm.com

Submitted by: Jeannette Kimiecik

Fix Bros Fruit Farm

"Best price and variety" apple picking. Family-owned orchard offering authentic Hudson Valley harvest experiences without pretentious crowds.

fixbrosfrultfarm.com

Submitted by: Beck Rourke-Mooney

Rose Hill Farm

Rose Hill Farm is a family-run orchard in the Hudson Valley where you can wander rolling hills, pick crisp apples straight from the trees, and savor the colors of autumn.

pickrosehillfarm.com

Submitted by: Beck Rourke-Mooney

Untermeyer Gardens

Hidden gem featuring Persian-style walled garden with Hudson River views. Sophisticated botanical experience combining formal gardens with dramatic overlooks.

untermyergardens.org

River-to-Ridge Trail

This trail spans diverse landscapes. Multi-use trail system connecting valleys to mountaintops for comprehensive Hudson Valley exploration and elevated views.

scenichudson.org

Submitted by: Beck Rourke-Mooney

Minnewaska State Park

Crystal-clear lake surrounded by white cliffs and carriage roads. Dramatic Shawangunk Ridge hiking with rewarding lake views and pristine wilderness.

parks.ny.gov

Submitted by: Beck Rourke-Mooney

Mohonk Preserve

Historic resort area with extensive hiking trails, dramatic rock formations, sweeping cliffside trails, and sophisticated mountain views perfect for elevated reflection.

mohonkpreserve.org

Submitted by: Beck Rourke-Mooney

North-South Lake

Features two pristine mountain lakes. Dramatic Catskill Mountain scenery with hiking trails leading to panoramic vistas.

dec.ny.gov

Submitted by: Beck Rourke-Mooney

Poet's Walk

"Where Washington Irving dreamt up Rip Van Winkle gazing at Catskill Mountains." Romantic landscape park with river views.

scenichudson.org

Submitted by: Beck Rourke-Mooney

The Cloisters

The Cloisters hosts medieval art and architecture. Located in Fort Tryon Park, overlooking the Hudson with sweeping river views. Offers a pay-what-you-wish policy for NY residents.

metmuseum.org

Green-Wood Cemetery

Peaceful and historic, dotted with ponds, rolling hills, and is home to some of the city's oldest trees. Once a Revolutionary War battlefield. Admission is always free.

green-wood.com

Inwood Hill Park

The last natural forest in Manhattan, with dramatic cliffs, caves, and brilliant fall foliage. Home to dramatic rock formations and old-growth trees, away from the bustle.

nycgovparks.org

Socrates Sculpture Park

This Queens park hosts large-scale sculpture and multimedia installations, surrounded by colorful foliage. It was built on a former landfill site.

socratessculpturepark.org

NY Botanical Garden

KUSAMA: Cosmic Nature is designed to change with the seasons, with a special spotlight on the beloved chrysanthemum, kiku, in Japanese. On view until October 31.

nybg.org

Submitted by: Beck Rourke-Mooney

ABOUT THE COVER

Heather Rosen is a multidisciplinary artist and advertising creative director based in New York and Los Angeles, trained as an art director and brand designer. Her practice spans visual identity, experiential campaigns, immersive installations and fine art; working across watercolor, mixed media illustration, papercut, and abstract figurative drawing. Drawing from her Jewish heritage, geometric symbolism, and the dialogue between tradition and reinvention, Rosen's work moves fluidly between the commercial and the personal.

For over a decade, Rosen has created private ketubah commissions, a tradition that continues to shape her visual language. The interplay of intricate forms, sacred geometry, and symbolic storytelling extends into larger explorations—most recently inspiring the cover art for this issue. Here, she reflects on the cannabis harvest in New York and the shifting of seasons, capturing a moment when the air feels charged with change. Through layered imagery, she explores cycles of growth and renewal, and how collective rituals mark the passage into something new.

www.thisishr.work
www.behance.net/heatherrosen
@thehrdept

The Other Sessions

RECAP

Clockwise: Todd Sheaffer on stage, the crowd at FloLo Holistic, Peter Shafran and Stu Zakim

We Built Something Real

by Peter Shafran

Here's what no one tells you about launching something new in cannabis: the hardest part isn't regulations or venues. It's proving your audience actually exists.

When we announced The Other Sessions with Todd Sheaffer on August 16, I wasn't sure anyone would pay $45 for an intimate acoustic performance in a wellness space. It felt right for our vision of elevated cannabis culture, but would people actually show up? Turns out we weren't the only ones who believed cannabis deserved better.

No Instagram crowds, no "packed house" energy. Just 40 cannabis enthusiasts who believed in what we're building. Every seat filled, people leaning forward, engaged. The peaked glass ceiling framed Todd's performance against Manhattan's skyline while string lights created atmosphere you can't manufacture in bigger venues.

Todd delivered 90 minutes of artistry from *Railroad Earth*, *From Good Homes*, and his solo catalog. But the music was the soundtrack, not the story.

Key partnerships made this possible. Tyler Curtis and Terrapin Productions invited The Other to co-produce, connecting us with Todd and FloLo Holistic. Aydin Mayers and Joel Granik weren't just venue partners—they were collaborators who understood our vision, providing a penthouse space that elevated everything.

The Todd Sheaffer show was proof of concept. We're expanding beyond music, integrating wellness and dining in ways NY's cannabis scene hasn't seen.

The Other Sessions represents everything we believe: cannabis culture doesn't need hiding or dumbing down. Our readers are executives, entrepreneurs, and creatives who want experiences matching their standards.

This is our time. This is our culture. This is our magazine.

Maybe It's Safe to Be With Other People

Group Ketamine Therapy Opens Lonely Hearts

by Jessica Klein

In a dimly lit room, ethereal music plays as you lie on a cushion. A soft mask covers your eyes. You've just had a profound reflective experience with a high dose of ketamine and slowly remove your mask, fluttering your eyelids to see the seven others around you doing the same. Before this, let's say you'd held a somewhat lonely worldview—perhaps that "people are unsafe and I'm better off alone," suggests founder of Brooklyn Psychedelic Therapy, Sybil Ottenstein. Now, with this group ketamine-assisted therapy session ending, "you find yourself sitting around a circle… processing what you felt and seeing it reflected back to you in the warm and caring eyes of your fellow group members," she says. You think, "Maybe it is safe to be with other people."

Besides the enticing price point (group ketamine-assisted psychotherapy, or KAP, sessions are much cheaper than individual ones, which can cost thousands of dollars), therapists say this type of realization gives group KAP its value. Ottenstein insists, "The healing power of the group" stems from the interpersonal nature of most people's traumas. Group KAP helps resolve this by more closely mimicking everyday life than an individual therapy session—especially in cities, where the constant throng of people can cause discomfort and stress. In group KAP, founder of Third Nature Therapy Julie Goldberg says participants must confront the "edginess of being around something that's agitating and calming yourself at the same time."

Edginess abates, however, in Goldberg's tranquil new Williamsburg office where she plans to host group KAP (even as a Task Rabbit assembles tables when I visit in August). Overlooking a Russian orthodox cathedral framed by exposed brick walls and a gangly cactus, Goldberg explains the process for her upcoming groups. After screening members—eight per two facilitators—to ensure they're right for the group and medication, she'll host a couple of in-person meetings without ketamine, allowing participants to get comfortable. Other practitioners, like Ottenstein, use Zoom for introductory sessions. Goldberg offers some psychoeducation, like on ketamine's studied benefits, but focuses on questions that facilitate connections: "What does your heart desire? Can you see your heart's desire in another group member?"

When it's time to take the ketamine, facilitators ensure the session runs smoothly, as Ottenstein describes, by "holding a container"—a space where participants feel protected and free to reflect. "I try to model principles," she says, like "listening with care," for example.

When participants rustle on their cushions, signaling the ketamine's dwindling effects, Goldberg likes to incorporate an added "sensory experience," she says. Having asked clients about their childhood snacks, she'll stock a fridge in her office with apples, peanut butter, and jelly to keep clients feeling connected to their bodies after dosing. Following sessions, without ketamine, group participants discuss their plans to incorporate what they learned into their daily lives.

"Ketamine is heart-opening," says Goldberg. In group therapy, "you're in this vulnerable space with people," and ketamine "accelerates and aids" in the connection with group members—and, ideally, other community members going forward.

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Cannabis and Psychedelics

Natural Allies for Brain Health?

by Dr. Manesh Girn

In recent years, both cannabis and psychedelics, such as psilocybin, have been increasingly accepted as powerful medicine rather than drugs for abuse. Often viewed very differently, these two ancient medicines may have more in common than we think. One of their lesser-known commonalities relates to supporting brain health, reducing inflammation, and recovering from brain injuries. Could cannabis and psychedelics be natural allies for healing the brain?

Distinct Brain Systems, Shared Effects

Psychedelics like psilocybin, LSD, and DMT act primarily on the brain's serotonin system, with their main effects mediated by the 5-HT2A receptor. This receptor is deeply involved in mood, perception, and cognitive flexibility, but it also plays a surprising role in brain health. When activated by psychedelics, it potently boosts neuroplasticity—the brain's ability to rewire itself—and reduces inflammation throughout the brain and body. Both of these effects can work magic behind the scenes to support healthy brain function and recovery, and are primary reasons psychedelics are showing promise for treating depression, anxiety, brain injuries, and other conditions.

Cannabis, in contrast, works through a different system: the endocannabinoid system (ECS), which helps regulate balance across the body's nervous, immune, and hormonal systems. CBD, in particular, activates CB2 receptors that reduce inflammation throughout the brain and help regulate your stress system. Although CBD doesn't induce a psychedelic experience, it does help calm the nervous system, protect neurons, and reduce the damage caused by chronic stress.

Complementary Paths to Healing

While they affect different systems, psychedelics and cannabinoids may work together in a complementary way. Psychedelics open a powerful window for change by enhancing neuroplasticity and disrupting rigid patterns. Cannabinoids, especially CBD, help regulate that process by stabilizing the nervous system and reducing inflammation. For people recovering from brain injuries, this pairing is especially promising–both for healing and protecting brain cells, as well as for psychological and emotional healing. Though research is still in early stages, the emerging science is very encouraging.

Safety and Legal Considerations

That said, combining substances isn't always wise. Effects can vary depending on dose, timing, emotional state, and individual sensitivity. What feels therapeutic for one person could be destabilizing for another, especially for those with an underlying mental health condition. This is why experts are very careful about combining psychoactive substances.

Being mindful of the legal landscape is also essential. Cannabis is now legal across Canada and, although still federally illegal in the U.S., it is increasingly available in many U.S. states. Psychedelics, on the other hand, remain federally illegal across North America but regulations are beginning to change. States like Oregon and Colorado have launched legal psychedelic therapy initiatives, and more than 15 cities have now passed measures to decriminalize natural psychedelics like psilocybin mushrooms, ayahuasca, and mescaline-containing cacti.

As science catches up to ancient wisdom, we're beginning to see cannabis and psychedelics not just as consciousness-altering substances, but as tools for deep healing. Used thoughtfully, they may offer powerful support for brain health, trauma recovery, and emotional resilience in the years to come.

Manesh Girn is a neuroscientist and psychedelic researcher who is dedicated to advancing our understanding of effects of psychedelics on our minds and brains, and how cutting-edge neuroscientific research can inform approaches to healing, growth, and personal transformation.

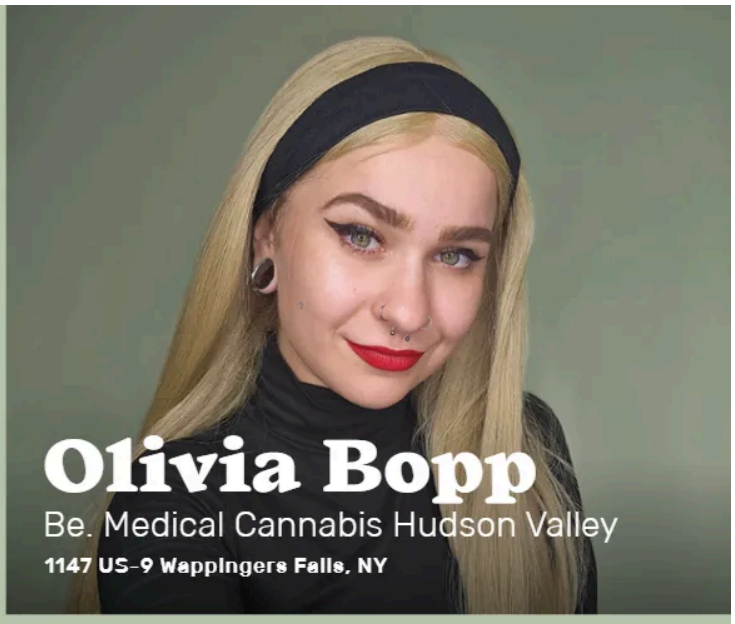
THE PSYCHEDELIC SCIENTIST

Across: Embodied Ambedo, acrylic on canvas, 2024, by Brynja Magnusson, *an Icelandic-American artist, writer, and symbol reader in shamanic practice; disseminating archetypal wisdom systems through art as a medium of teaching and communication. She shares ancient and modern systems through self-published illustrated guidebooks, synthesizing the I Ching, animal totem symbolism, Human Design, the Gene Keys, and Yin Mysticism. Through an anatomy lens, the medicine plants mimic the shape of the figure's muscles and bones. The pelvis, sacrum, spine, scapula... they become peyote, datura, ayahuasca, and sassafras. Ambedo is a meditative focus on subtle details, like on steam rising from a cup. Through meditation with these plants and the subtle awareness they bring, a heightened comprehension of body, feeling, and somatic reconnection might be found: Embodied Ambedo.*

BUD OF THE VALLEY

Celebrating Your Favorite Budtenders

by Alan Greenwald



Rooted in both personal experience and professional expertise, Olivia brings a rare blend of empathy and knowledge to the cannabis space. From navigating years of chronic pain to becoming Lead Budtender at Be. Hudson Valley, her journey reflects the transformative power of cannabis as both medicine and community. Today, she is recognized not only for her product knowledge but also for the trust she builds with patients and customers alike.

What drew you into the cannabis industry and how did you end up as a budtender at Be.?
I've lived with chronic migraines my whole life and spent years searching for relief—through surgeries, medications, even Botox treatments—but nothing worked long term. While working as a pharmacological technician, I saw the opioid epidemic unfold firsthand. Patients were overprescribed, suffering terrible side effects, and losing their quality of life. I realized I didn't want to follow that same path.

When I discovered cannabis, everything changed. It eased my pain more than anything else and allowed me to function again. My quality of life improved, and I felt inspired to be part of this industry. When I found Be., it felt like the perfect place to grow within a community that shares those same values. My very first cannabis experience years ago was on the beach, and even then, it felt like a healing moment.

What makes the culture at Be. unique?
We're like a family. Everyone knows each other's favorite products, and that closeness translates into the way we treat patients. It's not about transactions—it's about building trust. As lead budtender, I focus on creating a safe, welcoming space where people can learn. Whether someone is brand new or a longtime patient, we emphasize education and connection. That balance of knowledge and compassion is at the heart of what makes Be. special.

What's your philosophy when recommending a product?
I start by asking about a person's goals and level of experience. Then I consider their tolerance, lifestyle, and preferred consumption method. Some people want something discreet, like a vape, while others may benefit more from edibles or tinctures. The key is listening carefully and using that information to guide them toward the right product.

What's most rewarding about being a budtender, and what makes a great day behind the counter?
It's the people. Seeing lives change is the most powerful part of this work—some of my former pharmacy patients have transitioned into medical cannabis, gotten off opioids, and told me they've regained their lives. That kind of feedback means everything, especially since Be. is the only medical dispensary left in the area. At the same time, what makes each day so fulfilling is the mix of patients. I love catching up with my regulars, but I also love introducing newcomers to cannabis. Helping someone shift their perspective, learn something new, and discover the benefits of the plant is energizing and keeps me motivated every single day.

What's one misconception about legal cannabis you'd like to clear up?
That cannabis is dangerous or that dispensaries are just head shops. Legal cannabis is safe, tested, and professional. Dispensaries are places of learning, comfort, and support, not just stores.

What are your personal favorites?
Bibbo's Sparkling Pear THC-CBG gummies are my go-to. I was never an edibles person before, but these reduce inflammation, give me energy, and fit into daily life seamlessly. I also enjoy Chime & Chill's white chocolate espresso melts. They're delicious and provide a little boost for energy and appetite. Garlicane by Matter—this strain has been a staple for me and helped me truly realize the medicinal strength cannabis had. The tingly feeling the strain provides for neuropathy relief is unparalleled, and man, does it hit hard!

Want to nominate your favorite budtender? Scan the QR code:

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DARE YOU!
BEST SMOKE
ZEPPERZ
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GROWER'S CHOICE
TRIPLE BURGER
★★★★
SEASONAL SELECTION
MELTED STRAWBERRIES
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